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ART

An eye for the heroic

Francis Haskell

LORENZ E. A. EITNER
Géricault: His Life and Work
376pp, with 270 illustrations, 44 in colour. Orbis. £40.
0 85613 384 1

When Géricault died in January 1824, after many months of incapacitating illness, he was just thirty-two – five years younger than Raphael and Watteau at their deaths, about the same age as Giorgione and Seurat and four years older than Masaccio. The premature death of genius is always painful to contemplate, but it can reasonably be argued that only in the case of Géricault did an early and radical affect the subsequent development of art. In Lorenz Eitner's excellent book, *Géricault, His Life and Work*, we read of him on his sickbed lamenting the waste of his talent – "If only I had painted five pictures! But I have done nothing, absolutely nothing!" – and planning huge paintings of contemporary events which he must have realized he would never be able to carry out. Drawings, however, survive for the "Opening of the Doors of the Spanish Inquisition" and the "African Slave Trade", and they show him still struggling to achieve that balance between the actual and the monumental, the real and the emblematic, which had always inspired his finest work. Had he succeeded his example might have proved to be of decisive importance for the future.

One of the most striking features of the best painting of the nineteenth century is the almost complete absence, following the downfall of Napoleon, of images reflecting "public" issues. Between Delacroix's "Liberty on the Barricades" (1831) and Picasso's "Guernica" (1937) it is hard to think of a single major picture except for Manet's "Execution of the Emperor Maximilian" which conveys to us in vivid and memorable form the triumphs and disasters of the intervening hundred years – not merely bloodstained events of the type immortalized in these works but even of that far more peaceful "heroism of modern life" which, for Baudelaire, could embrace a government minister, founding on his political opponents in the Chamber.

The call of Baudelaire (who showed almost no interest in Géricault) for such an art was echoed by many

writers; and a number of artists, either spontaneously or in response to official commissions, tried to supply it: but with only the rarest exceptions their works were of little merit. Delacroix himself turned his back on the modern world to which his works allude only obliquely, and the fiasco of the competition for a painting intended to celebrate the Republic of 1848 made it embarrassingly clear that most gifted artists found it almost impossible to respond to such occasions. Even the monumental realism of Courbet shield

"Inquisition" been painted, they might have shown that his earlier "Raft of the Medusa" was not the isolated freak that it came to seem and might thereby have demonstrated how it was possible to give to the public events of the nineteenth century a dignity which had hitherto been reserved for the treatment of the history and myths of the Bible and of Antiquity.

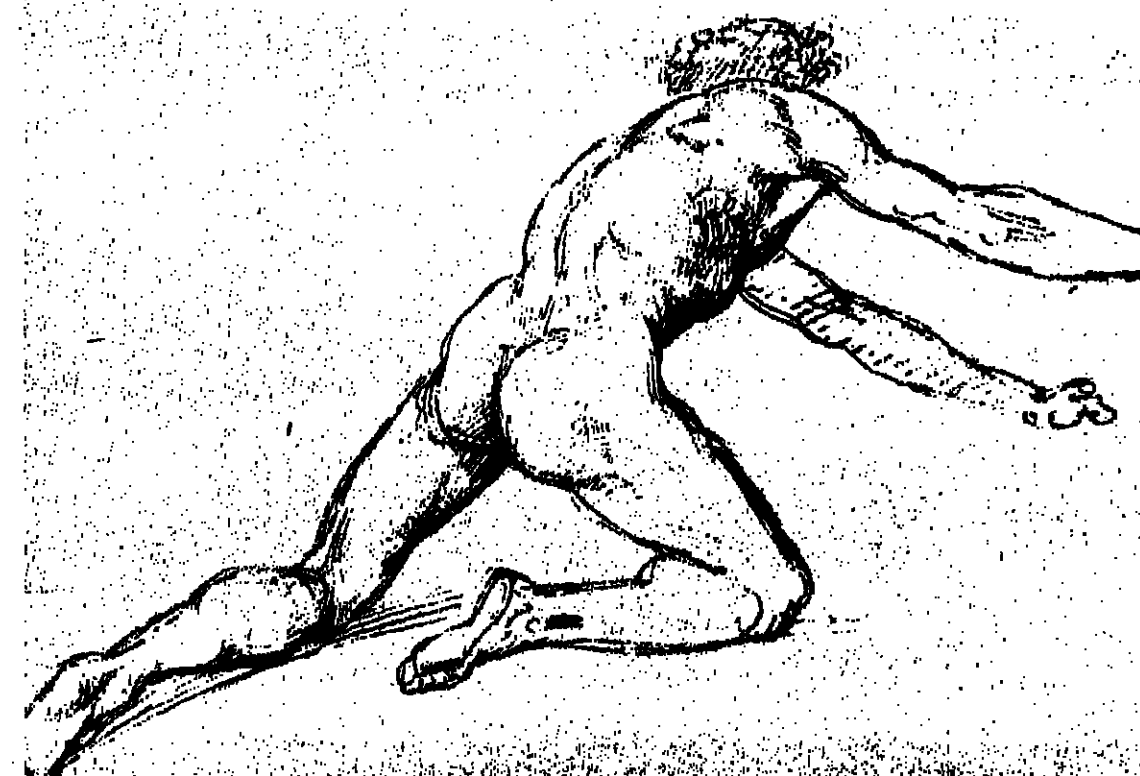
Géricault's ambitions in this respect were formed at a time when a number of other artists (some known to him,

supported him: the State. Eitner is very severe, and on the whole persuasive, in his objections to all those (from some of the Salon critics of the Restoration down to younger art historians – and opera composers – of today) who have tried to read an overt political message into "The Raft of the Medusa". He discusses in detail the rivalries in the King's government which led to the actual complicity of some of its members in publicizing a scandal which had led to atrocious suffering and death; and he emphasizes the

Trade" and "Inquisition" projects. In these circumstances where could such paintings be hung and who would pay for them? It is ironic that by so passionately involving himself in the issues of his day Géricault (who had an independent income) was also inaugurating another tradition – that of the homeless picture destined only for a museum.

The first major book on Géricault, by Charles Clément, was written more than forty years after his death, and it remains a primary source for almost every aspect of the artist's life and work – as well as being an excellent book in its own right. Since then – ie, for more than a hundred years – there have of course been a number of useful catalogues and important articles (many by Eitner himself), but more substantial works on Géricault have been very rare and mostly unsatisfactory. Indeed, it is impossible to think of a single book, before the appearance of this one, which could be recommended to anyone interested in the life and achievement of one of the most extraordinary painters of the nineteenth century. Fortunately this astonishing neglect has now been made good, and there are even reasons for satisfaction that this long-awaited volume did not appear earlier. For two notable events in Géricault's studies have occurred during the last few years.

It had always been known that Géricault's life had been profoundly affected by a troubled love affair and that he had had an illegitimate son; but although Clément knew the details neither he nor any of the artist's friends ever revealed them. Only in 1976 did the truth emerge that Géricault's mistress was in fact his maternal aunt, who was only six years older than himself and who survived him by more than fifty years. In what seems a rather tasteless allusion to *Phèdre* Géricault gave to his son the name Hippolyte, but more important is the impact that this guilt-ridden relationship may have had on his painting. Eitner explores certain pictures with great sensitivity for signs of stress and personal allusions, but these are not easy to find. Although Géricault made some drawings of heterosexual lovers which are intensely erotic, his world is essentially a masculine one of boxers, sailors, jockeys, and soldiers, and he drew a series of arrogantly virile studies of the male nude. Eitner is surely right in discouraging excessively



Géricault's "Study of a kneeling man", pen, 1818-19; reproduced from the book reviewed here.

away from too close a commitment to the present.

Wars and revolutions punctuated the century, governments arose and collapsed, monarchs visited each other and their subjects, scientific achievements changed the appearance of society and the world: and artists depicted all this and much more in canvases of varying sizes which have not entered our imaginary museums. Had Géricault's "Slave Trade" and

some wholly independent) had already proved their interest in similar themes: David, Gros and Goya are the outstanding names among them. But his own aims and even achievements were to some extent more daring than theirs – and raised problems which were never solved. For the pictures which he conceived were not the outcome of official sponsorship – indeed they were to some extent directed against the official "Slave Trade" and

benovolent reception given to the picture by the King himself and even by some royalist newspapers. But the fact remains that this painting of the disastrous and cruel consequences of official incompetence is probably the first major work of visual art (I do not include caricature in this category) ever to be inspired by antagonism to the "Establishment" – and Eitner's account makes it evident that much the same could be claimed for the "Slave

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facile deductions from this, but Géricault's psychological tensions are also revealed in his fascination with the macabre (though his actual painting of decapitated heads is unsensational) and in some other aspects of his subject matter: by far his most sympathetic and successful portraits are those of the insane, while the ones he painted of children can verge on the grotesque. In any case he was more at ease with horses than with human beings.

The other recent contribution to our knowledge of Géricault has come with the appearance of a *catalogue raisonné* in 1978, of his paintings in that invaluable series (originating in Italy but published also in France and elsewhere) *Tout l'oeuvre peint de...* As in all these volumes many of the pictures are reproduced on an extremely small scale, and it is not possible to give more than the bare minimum of facts and opinions. None the less for the very first time it is now possible to see photographs (some are in colour and of details) of all the pictures reasonably attributed to Géricault and of many that remain controversial or quite unconvincing. The author of this volume, Philippe Grunchee, is not very generous in his attitude to Eitner, who for two generations has been the leading scholar in the field, but the two books are essentially complementary and are generally in agreement, except that Eitner wholly rejects Grunchee's suggestion that one of the artist's best-known paintings – "The Portrait of a Young Man in a Studio" (formerly thought of as a "Self-Portrait") in the Louvre – a picture that has come to be thought of as emblematic of a whole generation of Romantic artists, is too weak to be by Géricault. Eitner, however, does not claim to include all the artist's works (though a high proportion of them are at least referred to in his notes), and he has produced a long, well-reasoned and at times moving book rather than the cursory text attached to a catalogue of the kind that is now so familiar.

The effect of the book is to show that Géricault was both right and wrong to deplore the fact that he had not

fulfilled his talents. What he might have done has already been suggested: what he did do is, of course, Eitner's main theme. He shows us a Géricault who was almost alone in being able to avoid the conventional and somewhat bloodless feeling for the values of antiquity which haunted many French artists after the downfall of Napoleon. Géricault's achievement lay not in renouncing those values but in sharpening them against brutal, even violent, commonplace experience. He is drawn to a race of riderless horses in Rome, or a slaughter house, or a public execution, or the London slums, and after an elaborate process of paring away detail he transforms these transient scenes into visions of elemental power. Sometimes when we look at his pictures we can scarcely guess at the original motif. In one of the most magical of all his paintings, "Four Youths holding a running Horse" in Rouen, the crude excitement of the Roman carnival has been purified into an Arcadian dream, as evocative a vision of antiquity as is to be found anywhere in art, recalling the scene which first inspired the painter only through its sense of controlled energy. At other times, as in the three large "Italian Landscapes", the attempt to dignify has led to rhetorical bombast. In "The Raft of the Medusa", his most ambitious and famous (but not his finest) work, the balance between violent sensationalism and sense of nobility is precarious and self-conscious. But in some of the London lithographs and above all in what was probably his last picture, "The Lime Kiln" in the Louvre, Géricault has been able to combine heightened observation and sensibility with a feeling for classical control so discreet and so perfect that these works rank very high among the rare masterpieces inspired by "the heroism of modern life."

Eitner has sensitively analysed the emotions and the experiments, the artistic intelligence and the understanding of the past that went into the creation of these pictures. A really great, if thwarted, master is at last given the attention he deserves.

The Mechanical Toy Museum

In the mechanical toy museum
At the end of Brighton's Palace Pier,
For new pence will buy five old,
For history suffers inflation as well

And Jean Boudin might not believe
How big the smudged brown coins appear,
Designed to fit a pauper's eyes
Or the jolly Nigger's thrifty tongue.

But no one is short of a penny in here
And that crimson-lipped, liquorice
Cast-iron slave is not one of the relics
Preserved in this tomb of Amusements.

Take care. These are delicate engines.
The pin-table pre-dates the tilt.
Two threadbare teams stand riveted
In goalless extra time, and the girls

In the peep-show must never be still
Of those bones will stay out of sight
If only to finger your change
This taste for profits of entropy

Best of all, watch the beheading.
"Madame Guillotine est morte."
A visitor carefully tells his son,
Who is keen to observe the procedure again.

But, when the Bastille springs open backwards,
Why, every time, does it seem that the corpse
Will pluck the straws from his spouting neck.
Take up his perked head and yell

With an absolute confidence back
Down the mid-mirrored ormolu halls
Of the ancient régime, as if we had
Never existed, still less eaten cake.

Sean O'Brien

The mind behind the brush

John Russell

LEE JOHNSON

The Paintings of Eugene Delacroix:
A Critical Catalogue 1816-1831
Volume 1: Text. 310pp, 34 black-
and-white and colour plates.
Volume 2: Plates. 212pp, 200 plates.
Oxford: Clarendon Press. £87.50
these.
0198173148

EUGENE DELACROIX

Journal 1822-63

944pp. Paris: Plon. Fr. 125.

Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) was one of the most intelligent men who ever held a paintbrush. As reader, writer and talker he had few rivals even at a time, and in a city, where those three activities were in apotheosis. Though not gregarious, he was sociable, and many were the major Parisians of the day who sought him out. Though never married, he loved the company of women and was in every way as distinguished a human being as he was a painter. Yet his privacy has rarely been violated. Never will he be as widely known as Gauguin and van Gogh. Though tender and constant in his private relations, he had a look of aloofness that thwarted curiosity during his lifetime and has served him well ever since. In the voluminous Journal, and in the no less voluminous correspondence, there are important gaps that will never be closed. The lifelong reader of Delacroix will remember page after page in which he confides in us, simply and without pretension; but he will also remember pages in which the great man tells us to mind our own business. All this makes Eugene Delacroix a very difficult subject for a biographer.

A few days after Delacroix died Charles Yriarte wrote that "the best biography of an artist is the catalogue of his works". Lee Johnson quotes Yriarte in the epigraph to the *catalogue raisonné* on which he has been working for many years; and in his preface he gives a spirited defence of the full-scale *catalogue raisonné* as the instrument of investigation best suited to Delacroix's achievement. Johnson starts from the premise that "the word 'definitive', applied to accounts of a productive artist's life and work, may be said to have become obsolete in the history of art. This catalogue does not, therefore, aim to be definitive." The catalogue form allows later adjustments in ways that are denied to a conventional critical biography, "with its inevitable over-simplifications and limited value as an instrument for further search". By virtue of its limitless ramifications and superabundance of individual detail, it has an all-embracing vision that we cannot expect of monographs on individual paintings, luminous as they may sometimes be.

Two other aspects of Johnson's catalogue should be noted at the outset. First, the chronology of Delacroix's life although brief, contains an exceptionally high quotient of new and significant material. Anyone who is interested, for example, in Delacroix's intellectual awakening during the years from 1816 to 1821 will find more from Johnson's "Iconic Catalogue" than from many a more serious publication. Secondly, in his entries for individual paintings, Johnson never shies himself for space or for an informed freedom of comment on every aspect of the painting in question. This freedom is exercised over issues on which critical opinion has swayed this way and that for generations – on the influence of Constable on the re-touching of the "Massacres of Chios" on the iconographical origins of "Liberty Leading the People" on the spatial dejections in "The Death of Sardanapalus", and on many another less celebrated but no less fascinating topic.

There is in fact a continual to-ing and fro-ing on almost every page of this catalogue between the impersonal scientific involvement in the checking and re-checking of facts and the affectionate rumination that reads like snippets in a diary in progress to which no terminal date has been set.



"The Execution of the Duke Marino Faliero" by Eugene Delacroix (Wallace Collection).

Sometimes the entries in question are wonderfully wayward – as when the subject of a lost portrait is pursued down the ages in terms of a kinsman who figures as a character in Lawrence Durrell's *Prospero's Call*.

Whether or not we accept Yriarte's estimate of the catalogue's role, it is beyond doubt that this particular catalogue includes a great deal of new biographical material and renders all existing biographies obsolete. This is as true of Delacroix's intellectual development as it is of such minor but perpetually troublesome problems as the question of whether he did or did not father a child by his devoted servant, Jenny le Guillou. (For the record, Johnson believes this supposition to be unproven, just as he infers from the medical evidence that Delacroix was indeed the son of Charles Delacroix and not, as has often been supposed, of Talleyrand.)

As England has never been rich in paintings by Delacroix, it is a consolation to read in this catalogue that "The Execution of the Duke Marino Faliero" in the Wallace Collection was one of Delacroix's particular favourites among his output. Patient study of Delacroix's sketchbooks in the Louvre has moreover empowered Johnson to trace the borrowings – from Titian, Carland, the school of Gentile Bellini and the military engravings of Johannes Stradanus – which Delacroix was able to harmonize into a finished painting that is distinctively his own.

Of comparable local interest is the entry relating to the portrait of Louis Auguste Schwiter in the National Gallery. Like its companion there, the portrait of Abel Widmer, it formerly belonged to Degas. On the score of its affinities with Sir Thomas Lawrence, it can stand as a souvereign of Delacroix's Anglomani; but, as was pointed out in 1957 by Martin Davies, there is a serious irresolution in the handling of the balustrade. Furthermore, the treatment of the trees in the background bears out the suggestion that they may have been painted by Delacroix's friend Paul Huet; Degas may have paid Delacroix the compliment of hanging the portrait of the Comte de Pastoret, but this does not affect the fact that with only this painting, which was turned down by the Salon jury in 1827, and the little portrait of Abel Widmer, the young Delacroix is distinctly under-represented in the National Gallery.

The catalogue will doubtless be judged in the end, as will Delacroix himself, with reference to his great paintings. Anyone who compares the entry relating to "Liberty Leading the People" – "Liberty Guiding the People" would, by the way, be closer to the exhibition that was lately devoted to that one painting in the Louvre can judge for himself the amplitude of Johnson's annotations. Equally, the entry relating to the "Scenes from the Chios Massacres" covers the ground firmly and with a panoramic insight here and there – as when Johnson remarks that "with a restraint that seems almost Delacroixian to generations that have known 'Guernica', Delacroix has, as surely as David, crystallised the aspirations of his age in the 'Horatii', found a pictorial equivalent for the intense feelings aroused in a whole generation of Europeans by the Chios massacres".

Altogether, this first section of Johnson's life-work makes an impatient for its completion. Meanwhile we need more than ever a completely re-studied, re-edited and fully illustrated version of the *Journal* of Eugene Delacroix. André Joubin's edition of 1932 has done a noble service, but after half a century much that is new can be said about the *Journal*. Much could be said, moreover, by an appropriate choice of illustrations, for Delacroix in his diary ranged across a spectrum of human concerns that calls for images as insistently as it does for footnotes.

For the moment, the new one-volume edition of the *Journal*, with its foreword by Hubert Damisch, lies well in the hand and has an imitation leather binding padded in a way that was unknown in Delacroix's day and may still be ranked as unfamiliar. Rightly, the Joubin edition, and we are entitled to believe that, just as Joubin superseded the pioneer work of Alfred Robaut, so would he wish us to supersede his own edition in due course.

The Eighteenth Century: Art, Design and Society 1689-1789 by Bernard Smith (305pp. Longman. £8.95. Denver 0 582 491436) is volume 2, though 0 582 491436 is the first to be published, of a four-volume documentary history of taste in Britain. Through extracts from journals, diaries, correspondence, newspapers, magazines, and other contemporary material, Bernard Smith provides a detailed examination of the art world in Britain as it appeared at the time to those involved in it.

The landscape of the heart

D. J. Enright

ELIZABETH SPENCER

The Stories of Elizabeth Spencer
429pp. Penguin. £2.95.
0 14 006436 2

Elizabeth Spencer was born in Mississippi ("the South", our much perused literary land", as Eudora Welty puts it in her amiable but brief foreword), was "indefinitely detained" in Italy, and now lives in Montreal. These are the terrains of her stories, not invented, but found or given.

The new reader of this generous selection of stories drawn from the period 1944 to 1977 – mind still virgin, apart perhaps from some vague confusion of Elizabeths: Bowen, Taylor, Bishop, Hardwick, Jennings, Jenkins – will be struck by those coolly brilliant phrases, images or aperçus which at once mark out the artist from the journeyman of letters: the more brilliant for their seeming casualness, they appear, you do not hear them coming. In Venice, German tourists move "in a slow, solemn, counter-clockwise procession . . . as though under ritual orders to see everything", while the pigeons are "more mechanical still, with their wound-up motions, purple feet, and jewel-set eyes". In Rome, when a small bell rings in a small church close by, "one actually looked about, expecting to see it, as though for a bird which had burst out singing". In Mississippi, a white shirted man lugs the horse so low that you would think the animal "had run under a low line of drying laundry and caught something to an otherwise empty saddle and bare withers".

In the second story here, "The Eclipse", a twelve-year-old boy thinks that his music teacher, reckoned by the community to fancy herself just because she has lived in New York and knows about music, is really "no more than a star", but grows indignant when she deserts him for a newspaperman she knew at college. Later he worries, "How did she get home?" Elizabeth Spencer is beautifully deft in her dealings with child characters. Two little girls at Christmas, comparing presents, find it simpler to think of what they didn't get than of what they did. And especially fine is "Moon Raker", about a space-struck American boy and a Korean war orphan. Bill is always asking Janey what her Korean name is, because he likes to hear her reply: "something that

sounded like a little mouse telling you its name".

In "I, Maureen", a painful account of a girl driven into – or perhaps embracing – something near insanity, the narrator recalls a winter night of driving snow, "snow everywhere, teeming, shifting, lofty as curtains in the dream of a mad opera composer, cosmic, yet intimate as a white thread caught in an eyelash". Even here there are traces of sly humour. Maureen is an unhappy "I" on the run from "We", specifically from the Parthams, a wealthy Montreal family into which (astoundingly, since she is neither pretty nor "classy") she has married. Her husband is handsome and (she can't think why) actually loves her. They have first a baby boy, the looked-for crown prince, and then a girl, "Isa". Nature great? She belongs to the Parthams.

"The Adult Holiday", written in the early 1960s, is a jewel, four pages long. A husband erupts in a violent, incomprehensible, unforgivable rage against his wife – short of his promptly admitting to insanity, she has no option but to pack her bags and call a lawyer. Turning herself into a maid, she gets out the silver and polishes it, without gloves: her spotted hands will no doubt annoy him, but "lamenting her hands would be like mourning the death of a kitten after the funeral of a child". When their little girl comes home from school and asks why everyone is sad, her father tells her, because tomorrow is his forty-fifth birthday. If her mother had gone away soon after they met, then he wouldn't be here on his forty-fifth birthday, he would be somewhere else . . .

"Where would it be?" the child asks, "caught in a tangle of syntax almost like an enchantment. But then, why hadn't she – or he – gone away? Because they didn't want to. There is nothing 'slight' about this sparse, concentrated story, to which a coarser writer would have given an unhappy ending without thinking twice.

The family there was a small one. Predominant, particularly in the Mississippi items, is the large and closely knit family, a source of comfort but also of suffocation, it gives you your place in the world but a place determined by others, from which you separate yourself perhaps by necessity but certainly at your peril. The theme is pursued in various guises, in varying degrees of comedy and of tragedy, with sentimentality always evaded nimbly. The woman who remarks that there have to be some things you can count on, for you need "a sort of permanent

landscape of the heart" when so much is changing, is thinking of the boy she knew twenty years before; he drank heavily then, and it is only right that he should go on drinking heavily. Contrariwise, on her first day in Rome, at last, Miss Theresa Stubbsfield, who has nursed a succession of Stubbsfields through their lengthy and last illnesses, receives letters from some reporting the death of Cousin Elec and hinting that something will have to be done (by her) about Cousin Emma. She tears the letters up and buries the pieces in a pot containing a white azalea, on the Spanish Steps. "Well, it certainly is beyond a doubt the most beautiful family funeral of them all!" she thinks. Visualizing a statue of some heroic classical woman holding a dagger that drips with stony blood, she adds: "And if they should ever object to what I did to them, they've only to read a little and learn that there have been those in my position who haven't acted in half so considerate a way."

Elsewhere a young scientist, Aline, specializing in disease-carrying parasites found in South American countries, remembers the day when she excitedly told her family that she had been promised a fellowship after graduating. "One by one she saw those faces, so like her own, turn glum, and dollar signs, as if in comic strips, appeared to grow on their eyeballs." The story begins in a New Orleans restaurant where she is chatting with a young man met at a convention a few months previously. He comes from Chicago, where (unless perhaps they are Jewish) they don't have families like hers. "Good God," he jokes. "Incest, suicide, insanity, cancer, murder, divorce. Is that the best, really the best, you can do? I thought every Mississippi family had at least one idiot, two rapists, and a good criminal lawyer." She says, "I've only described my immediate family", adding: "Of course, I love them all." Self-knowledge is something she believes in, although (she muses to herself) "trying to find it in the bosom of a Mississippi family was like trying to find some object lost in a gigantic attic, when you really didn't know what you were looking for." In these stories, light-hearted passages are often less wholeheartedly light than they seem at first, just as the sombre passages stop short of utter and final darkness.

Maureen escapes from the Parthams, but at a dreadful cost, and only into a version of limbo. A much more affectionate and indeed moving account of the process is unfolded in "The Day Before", which starts with

the child's first day at school. Besides her parents and her grandfather, she has the three old Thomases, unmarried sister and bachelor brothers, who live next door, with their eccentric dogs, their valuable china (from which the dogs are fed) and the rosewood furniture which had belonged to a highly educated aunt, now dead, whose parrot could quote Shakespeare. There's family life for you – surely all the life you could ever wish for. After that first day at school, life changes: the same faces are there, at home, but somehow they are fading. "This was the big surprise, and I had no power over it."

Life is important right down to the last crevice and corner. The tumult of a tree limb against the stormy early morning February sky will tell you forever about the poetry, the tough non-sad, non-guilty struggle of nature. It is important the way ants go one behind the other, hurrying to get there, up and down the white-painted front-porch post. The nasty flash and crack of lightning, striking a tall young tree, is something you have got to see to know about. Nothing can change it; it is just itself.

So nothing changed, nothing and nobody, and yet having once started to lose them a little, I couldn't make the stream run backward, I lost them completely in the end. Little guilt, the little sadness I felt sometimes: was it because I hadn't really wanted them enough, held on tightly enough, had not, in other words, loved them?

Now they are all dead, dogs, parrots and people, and furniture is dispersed. "Long before anybody died, or any animal, I was walking in a separate world." Yet years later, at a friend's house, she sees a box of blue milk glass which the owners have never been able to open. It came from "the old Thomas house", she is told. Without thinking, she moves her finger to the hidden catch and the box flies open: she must once have been shown how it worked. "Something in me was keeping an instinctive faith with what I knew. Had they never been lost then at all? I wondered."

That is a perfect story, which means it could never be a novel. The longest piece here is the ninety-page "Knights & Dragons" – the author remarks that "it wound up a novel" – which concerns an American woman working at the US cultural office in Rome. This establishment is portrayed humorously but with no trace of gilding; its director "The Day Before", which starts with

Mabinogion monologues

Linda Taylor

ROSEMARY MANNING

Open the Door

180pp. Cape. £7.95.

0 225 021 125

"Did you find your story in the tale, whatever it's called?" asked Ralph. "The Mabinogion. Yes, I found it."

"What's it about, this book?" "It's a collection of Welsh folk tales. Tales of revenge and magic and . . . love."

So says Gwyneth Morris, an expert on Iron Age weapons, who, with Ralph Shroton (photographer and draughtsman), is part of an archaeological expedition, headed by Professor Hubert Lodars at a site in North Wales. Hubert herself, Gwyneth is also something of an expert on the folklore of her country; and the stories in the *Mabinogion*, related by her to the other members of the team, underlie and inform the five main characters' preoccupations as they dig up prehistoric artefacts. Alan falls in love with her, but in a demented, Othello-like fashion, is thus avoided. All return home sadder and wiser with their pasts exorcized – though the future for the professor may be bleaker than he imagines as Meg's resolution, ironically, is to leave him.

Open the Door is weighty with allusion. The Mabinogion parallels are not the only ones: between bouts of drunkenness, Ralph has been kept going for the past thirty years by reading his dog-eared volumes of Proust, and, for bedtime reading, in Wales, he's brought *Scarlet and Black*, while Meg, who finds Dickens "ideal

reading when away from home", has brought *Dombey and Son*.

Manning's unravelling of memory, consciousness and family animosity is executed partly by authorial narrative and partly by the juxtaposition of the five characters' internal monologues. Although she avoids the temptation to try to re-create authentic thought, her monologues prose jars in its efforts to express abstract emotion and describe concrete events at the same time. Gwyneth, for example, on an evening walk:

A strange day it's been. I made another find in my trench: a beautiful little bone ornament . . . I was tempted almost beyond bearing to slip it into my pocket. To give it to Deborah. Only two days now. Oh God, no – not Alan. He's stopped about fifty yards away. I shan't move.

Though it is comforting to find such trite thoughts in an academic's head, it is unconvincing as self-revelatory prose, the more so since the distinctions between the five voices are ill-defined.

This book is a collection of introspective tales. Tales of love and revenge and resolution. But the simple mythic symbolism of the Mabinogion, model is, sadly, lost in Manning's attempt to be Proust, Stendhal and Dickens all at once. Bravew and indebted could never have stood up to so much recollection, analysis and morality. And neither can Ralph or Alan or Hubert or Meg or Gwyneth.

rumpus, clearly of cultural implication, over the ambassador being poisoned by the ceiling paint.

Ceiling paint? No Roman ever believed this, just as no American ever doubted it. Solemn assurances eventually were rendered by a US medical staff that the thing had actually taken place. The Romans howled. You could judge how close you came to being permanent here by how much you doubted it.

Martha too is escaping – from her husband, a great and good thinker, teacher, financial expert and so forth: clearly a dragon. She doesn't find her perfect gentle knight; if she did, she would probably run away from him too. Her love affair with a visiting expert (knights shouldn't be already married) is conducted in "starved little rooms" around the city, even though she has a fine apartment. Sexual attraction, and action, are conveyed with finesse. Perhaps "Knights & Dragons" is too extended for the story it grew out of and too elliptic for the novel it (almost) grew into. Despite the local successes, characteristic (we now see) of this author, the tale is more elusive than even this author's delicacy of touch can justify require, and the main characters, sharply present at the outset, seem to fade as the pages turn as if under some rather too protracted process of refinement.

Aline's picture of her family – "incest, suicide, insanity. . . bring to mind Marvin Mudrick's suggestion that the future historian wishing to get a sense of what life was like in the US between FDR and Nixon need only empty out the whole sack of Joyce Carol Oates' and scratch around in the true grain of America". Typical activities in Oates novels are arson, rape, riot, mental breakdown, murder (plain and fancy, with excursions into patricide, matricide, uxoricide, mass filicide), suicide. Elizabeth Spencer's America, her world, is a different one – a world shared with Eudora Welty, Willa Cather, Katherine Anne Porter, Jean Stafford, Anne Tyler and (it isn't essential to a female but it helps to come from the South) Peter Taylor – and much closer to Henry James and Edith Wharton than to the noisy, sweating males (though females are eligible too) responsible for what is commonly thought of as the American Novel, even the Great American Novel. It may be – for it is in the nature of good writing to show up its own occasional deficiencies – that with some of Elizabeth Spencer's stories the whole is less than the sum of the parts. But the parts generally add up to a considerable amount.

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reviewed literary works as if they were weapons to hand for his boisterous attack on the political inabilities and social hypocrisies of American life, and, finally, in reading him one feels that the work of literature is but an occasion for yet another unorthodox moral lesson, predictable in its point although filled with delightfully unexpected turns in its manner.

Wilson was serious about the aesthetic character of the literary work and rather than using it his moral sensibility was responsive to shaping by it. In reading Wilson one has a sense of the way in which great literature alters consciousness, but in reading Mencken one gets the sense that literature is good or bad to the extent that it advances a fixed perception of reality. Mencken is pithier than Wilson; he delivers epigrams that head straight for the pages of *Bartlett's*. Wilson's periods carry us along far more slowly, at times even ponderously. They are designed to take us on a tour of the edifice his intellect has constructed and we must keep to a steady pace but never run, as we visit its many rooms. Mencken's marvellous talent for forceful judgments seems made for the journalist's trade - he astounds us by being the superlative of his kind. But Wilson's intelligence surprises because it seems so unskilled to the demands of journalism and yet makes journalism suit it - makes journalism a superlative kind of writing.

In common with his daemon, Poe, as well as with Mencken, Wilson was very conscious that the range of his learning and the focus of his interest were shared far more by professors than by fellow journalists. His work, accordingly, took on a certain aggressive competitiveness when it approached the neighbourhood of scholarship. In his last years his skirmishes with the academy escalated into a notorious yet not terribly significant battle over the decision of the National Endowment for the Humanities to fund a series of bibliographically "definitive" editions of the works of major American authors rather than the series of one-volume, "readers' editions" (modelled

after the *Pléiade* series) he envisioned. Although in his lifetime he lost the battle, he now appears to be winning the war. The kind of editions he hoped for are entering as "The Library of America", with National Endowment support (*TLS*, June 3), and it is ironic that the enterprise is being conducted, in the main, by professors and is publicized as homage paid to the memory of Edmund Wilson. "The Library" is taken to represent a long overdue reconciliation between the professoriat (a favourite Menckian term) and the great literary practitioner who stood outside it and seemed singlehandedly to outweigh it.

The differences between the two, however, have been exaggerated. Wilson, unlike Poe and Mencken, graduated from a university and always retained an interest in Princeton and its faculty as well as his classmates' fortunes. He taught there for a term as he had taught earlier at the University of Chicago; he acknowledged his indebtedness to professorial books in his own researches; he used the resources of university libraries (most notably Harvard's for *Patriotic Gore*) to the profit of all readers. Indeed, his appetite for the details of authorship was especially attracted to letters, diaries, and recondite lore, the kind of material universities are especially apt at finding and preserving.

There is, though, a deeper division between Wilson and the academy than that of their publicized differences, one that is not closed even by doctoral dissertations on Edmund Wilson. In the three decades preceding his death Wilson was the critic whose weekly writings were most eagerly awaited and widely read by teachers and students of literature in the university who at the same time engaged in critical exercises almost totally removed from what interested them in his work. His intelligence constantly informed theirs - on Yeats or Marx or Ulysses S. Grant - but his empirical method and the massive learning on which it was exercised seemed to offer no imitable approach to the practice of criticism as the theories, for example, of the New Critics or the Freudians or the

Marxists, for all the paucity of their actual results as compared with Wilson's. What Wilson said of his professor, Christian Gauss, might also have been applied to him: "he had no communicable body of doctrine and no pedagogical method that other teachers could learn to apply".

It does not necessarily follow, however, that Wilson's practice is irrelevant to today's lively debate on issues of critical theory. Those who oppose the notion that literature is determined by the existing codes of literature rather than the reality it verbalizes, or the notion that interpretation is limitless rather than single and discoverable, would seem to be those who most admire Wilson's concern for the interdependence of literature and society. But a sampling of his work such as is afforded by *The Portable Edmund Wilson* does not point in this direction. In *Axel's Castle*, for example, Wilson considered Valéry's view that literature is "an art which is based on the abuse of language" - that is, it is based on language as a creator of illusions, and not on language as a means of transmitting realities". He saw the validity of Valéry's argument as a statement about the intrinsic nature of the literary work. When he took issue he did so by frankly bringing extrinsic criteria to bear, criteria drawn from his historical sense of the spiritual needs of his time. Those who assert a theory of literature's direct mimetic connection with reality might well learn from him that they should examine and then proclaim their moral ground for the assertion rather than insisting that their propositions affirm an intrinsic truth about literary works.

With regard to the question whether the meaning of the literary work is singular and discoverable, Wilson admitted that after we have searchingly scrutinized the work from the historical and biographical points of view we still must be able to tell good from bad and these viewpoints will not provide the judgment. He rejected the idea that the judgment could be made on the basis of whether the work contained certain qualities such as "unity" or

"universality" or "realism", because different schools demand different qualities at different times. Moreover, "you could have any set of these qualities... and still not have a good play, a good novel, or a good poem". Finally, he said, good or bad was a matter of emotional reaction so that literary quality could not be discussed profitably until people found grounds of agreement in the coincidence of their emotional reactions.

In Wilson's thinking, then, we find more than the rudiments of agreement with current theories of interpretative community. If he did not accept interpretation as limitless it was because he believed in the superiority of the meanings assigned by the expert reader, not because he believed meaning was independent of reader response. He bluntly defined the elite as follows: "The implied position of the case in every other art is simply that they know what they know, and that they are determined to impose their opinions by main force of eloquence or assertion on the people who do not know."

Wilson maintained his position as a leader of this elite through seeking always to know a good deal, and he accepted the programme of hard work this position required of the critic. In weekly pieces over a period of some four decades he not only imposed his opinion but in so doing brought together an audience of readers who came to share his reactions; he transformed, that is, dentists and shopkeepers, architects and bankers into members of the elite community. His achievement is unparalleled in American literary history and the great loss felt after his death has been the loss of this community. The universities continue to hold their captive audience for serious literature, but no critic or combination of critics has succeeded after Wilson in becoming the voice of that large and elusive group, the unprofessional readers of serious literature. They have been returned to their isolation and no longer exist as the community. Wilson's elitism was free of the political phobias which

masquerade as aesthetic strictures in the criticism of those who pursue Elliot's elitism, as his consistent appeal to a large audience was free of the vulgar mendacities of the mass media. The dissolution of the audience he shaped is a diminution of the quality of life in each home to which the mailman brings the weekly magazines, of the quality of life of every intelligent reader whose literary interests are none the weaker for his needing to have complex matters explained - in short, it is a diminution in the quality of cultural life in America.

The facility offered the work of the editor of *The Portable Edmund Wilson* by the fact that Wilson constructed almost all of his writing in short, detachable units is outweighed by the problems presented by the many interests he pursued. Lewis M. Dabney has chosen, by and large, to omit Wilson's pieces on the more ephemeral topics of popular culture and on the particular pleasures to be found in minor authors, although the writings on these topics are neither ephemeral nor minor. The volume misses shades in Wilson's literary character in favour of rendering the strong tones. But the strong tones are there, and that, of course, is the first requirement. Especially rewarding are Professor Dabney's incisive selections from the personal memoirs and the letters. They afford a sense of the connection between the pains of the private man and the triumphs of the public man which may easily have escaped many of Wilson's admirers. What *The Portable Edmund Wilson* renders unobtrusively is the way in which Edmund Wilson too may be considered in terms of his famous thesis drawn from the *Philoctetes* story, that the bow of artistic power depends for its efficacy on the wound of the artist.

But of course the volume's greatest appeal should be to those too young or too preoccupied to have been shaped by Wilson's elitism. It is still tempting ground for a new biographer.

De-la-Noy has, however, failed to bring Elgar alive; he has been unable to use these prolific sources in an illuminating way. He has tried to read far too much into many of the "jocular" phrases with which Elgar's letters are peppered. He has taken at almost face value Dora Powell's account of her friendship with the composer. He has also been insufficiently critical of the memoirs of Rosa Burley who, in a different way, ground her axe as sharp as Mrs Powell's. De-la-Noy has been unable to resist concentrating on the "love interest" - or the lack of it - in Elgar's life. His view is that it was Mrs Powell, "Dorabella" of the *Enigma Variations*, who was the main inspiration of Elgar's music, not, as the conventional and was indeed Elgar's view, his wife Alice.

De-la-Noy backs up his claim with a range of well known incidents - taken mainly from Mrs Powell's own book, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation* - which he reassembles to show a *ménage à trois* in which the young girl was allowed to engage in "platonic frolics" with the "moody genius of forty-three", while his wife was grateful to be relieved of "any necessity to play a romantic role" and was thus able to get on with running her

professional a person became, the more he or she was governed by objective intelligence, purified of merely personal ambition and biases." Perhaps Fraser's point is best made by the *New Yorker* cartoon which has one Puritan saying to another as they step off the Mayflower, "My immediate desire is religious freedom, but my long range goal is to get into real estate." Surely, the idealistic and pragmatic sensus have long clashed in America, and Fraser nicely documents this important division in the national consciousness. Whether this adds up to a coherent tradition of chivalry, however, is another matter.

Knights of Columbus

Richard Lehan

JOHN FRASER

America and the Patterns of Chivalry
301pp. Cambridge University Press.
£15.
0 521 24183 9

Readers of John Fraser's *America and the Patterns of Chivalry* may at first be startled by the title. After all, modern America prides itself on being without a feudal past or overlay of chivalric values. But Fraser disabuses us quickly and documents how chivalric values entered the American consciousness primarily in the South, with its emphasis on the romantic traditions of honour, courage, and idealized forms of love and courtship. Sir Walter Scott's influence in Europe found its equivalent in the novels of William Gilmore Simms, John Pendleton Kennedy, and G. P. R. James, James Hangerford, and others. If Fraser had ended his argument here, he would have identified a tradition of cultural activity and thought that brought Mark Twain to the United States, a tradition which dominated the North and West as well, and that a chivalric martial ideal lived with, and helped to soften, a pastoral-heraldic ideal by bringing America back to elemental notions of honour and respect which necessitated a more humane sense of justice. What intellectual historians have referred to as "the genteel tradition," Fraser claims is the same of this new chivalry, with Teddy Roosevelt among its more perfect embodiments. Fraser believes that a privileged Ivy League education helped to codify this new spirit on the football field at the same time that it was being formalized by novelists like Gilbert Follen in his Frank Merriwell stories or Owen Johnson in *Slover at Yale*. This, in turn, became the imaginative breeding-ground for the genteel novelist, the end-product of which was Scott Fitzgerald in his Basil Lee stories and *The Great Gatsby*.

Out of this tradition in turn came the businessman, embodied by the likes of Andrew Carnegie, whose values are available in his *Triumph of Democracy* and in such popular journals as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Collier's*. On the other side of this cultural coin are the muckrakers, David Graham Phillips and Lincoln Steffens, who challenged the system in the same name of fair play. This also was a time of Irish ward bosses, political reformers, and larger than life prize-fighters, who all somehow become a part of Fraser's paradigm before he moves on to a discussion of the American radicalism of Max Eastman and Floyd Dell, John Reed and Big Bill Haywood, the Wobblies and organized labour. These connections seem clear and necessary to Fraser, but leave the reader navigating in waters that soon become uncharted.

Fraser seems to have written three books here - one on American chivalry, another on the genteel tradition, and a third on patterns of radicalism. The movements between and among these ideas become very slippery and the reader gets out for his own account. Fraser's main sources, installed in "The Palace," a Northern prototype can be more easily be found in Robinson Crusoe than in Don Quixote or Sir Galahad. Crusoe, the archetypal Puritan, who believed it was possible to control nature through tools and technology in the name of the new commerce, and the Civil War, as Fraser again shows in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz". It had early been embodied by Benjamin Franklin and moved West with the frontier, finding further embodiment there in James V. Hill. Both Franklin and Hill had more influence on Jay Gatsby's imagination than Cervantes or Scott. If Basil Lee plays out a genteel idea of self, Gatsby plays out a frontier ideal in the new secular city, which makes him vulnerable to Tom Buchanan (who

despite his Yale education, is devoid of honour) as Quixote is to the new mercantilism. It is precisely Fraser's inability to see his evidence in such historical perspective that allows him to slip so easily from one chivalric notion to its supposed equivalent. And when he adds Nick Carraway to the sequence - the man who lied to himself and called it honour - he seems to be working more with contrary than supporting evidence.

But to resist Fraser's argument is in no way to deny the liveliness of his mind or to discredit the awesome documentation that he brings to this book, with evidence drawn from social

and political history, popular and serious literature, journalism and cinema. And Fraser shows convincingly that beneath American ideals lies a radical violence which the chivalric tradition both intensified in the name of heroic action and yet controlled and rendered "less wanton, brutal, and destructive." It also softened what Fraser rather strangely calls American "neopastoralism", the belief that "what counted above all was the creation of a rational, pacific, contented, and smooth-running world, and that society needed to be coolly ordered to that end by rational professionals..." And the more

Faith and the fools

Lachlan Mackinnon

TOM QUIRK

Melville's Confidence Man: From Fanny Hill to the City
272pp. University of Missouri Press.
£13.50.
0 8263 0370 1

The Confidence-Man has been subjected to wider and wilder flights of interpretation than are usual even with Melville, and Tom Quirk has performed a valuable and necessary service in offering such an interesting and level-headed discussion of the novel, and its background. His own prose is rather clothed and repetitive, but his matter survives. Quirk begins by looking at Melville's sources, in particular at the original of his confidence man, arrested in 1849, and the use to which journalists put him for satirical purposes. Quirk sees, in *Confidence-Man*, a series of secondary prophesies, etc. - as the text through which Melville developed a satire play into something larger: he takes the motif at the beginning of the novel to be the hero's first incarnation.

an apostolic figure as required by the episode. The novel does not offer the facile affirmation of moral values, but explores the problems met by faith in the everyday world. He points out that Melville toned down his sacrilegious intentions in the book, he patiently elucidates the role of the confidence man, as a touchstone whose presence compels the other characters into self-disclosure, and argues that the novel moves from a scornful contempt to a "humane and feeling skepticism" as shown by the pity of the last chapter.

This emotional development within the novel is made more convincing by being treated as prophetic rather than philosophical. Quirk is always on the look-out for the telling detail: the incident or word which shapes significance. This attachment to the specific makes him rightly mistrustful of allegorical readings. If *The Confidence-Man* is an allegory, it is not a very interesting one; richness comes from the intermingling of allegory - thus Mark Winsome is clearly related to Emerson, but to say that he is Emerson would be crudely literal. Quirk is sympathetic to Melville's poetic enlargement.

Quirk is also informative on the use made of Cervantes, Shakespeare and

Milton in the novel, but he says rather lamely at one point that Hamlet "assumes not to disguise" and cannot therefore be as germane as Melville suggests. Autolycus is preferred as a model. This overlooking of the subtle disposition is an unexpected blunder, but one which indicates what this book crucially lacks. The Hamlet enigma is much like the *Confidence-Man* enigma, the reasons for it lying in our experience reading the novel, and Quirk pays too little attention to that experience.

The Fiddle is a ship of fools, and the reader one of its passengers. Quirk's acceptance of the motto as the confidence man rests on an authority rather than an experience, and must do so because part of the point to tell the novel is our inability at first to tell which character is the confidence man. (Even Black Guinea's roll-call is inaccurate, and Quirk is unduly disturbed by this.) In a sense, all passengers are confidence men. Similarly, we struggle to untie the various Hamlets we see: this is a distinguished book, but it is a great pity that it does not reconcile its same scholarship with the dizzying effect the novel has on the reader: we still lack a full account of this great and perplexing work.

The enigma unexplained

Michael Trend

MICHAEL DE-LA-NOY

Elgar: The Man
240pp. Allen Lane. £12.95.
0 7139 1332 3

CHRISTOPHER REDWOOD (Editor)

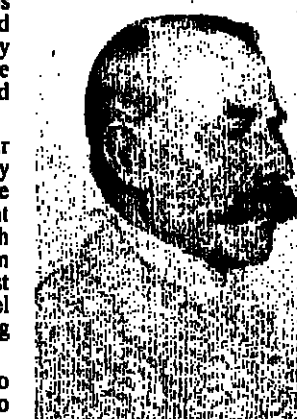
An Elgar Companion
311pp. Moorland Publishing. £9.95.
0 86190 024 3

There is a good new biography of Elgar to be written but Michael De-la-Noy's *Elgar: The Man* is not it. The number of the composer's own writings that have been properly published is considerable; many recollections and memoirs of Elgar have found their way into print and there is an impressive industry of secondary work and analysis.

Earlier biographers, in particular Percy M. Young, have cleared a way through these and other more obscure sources and all of Elgar's important music is available on record. Although interesting books on Elgar have been written over the years - the best biography is undoubtedly Michael Kennedy's of 1968 - it is still tempting ground for a new biographer.

De-la-Noy has, however, failed to bring Elgar alive; he has been unable to use these prolific sources in an illuminating way. He has tried to read far too much into many of the "jocular" phrases with which Elgar's letters are peppered. He has taken at almost face value Dora Powell's account of her friendship with the composer. He has also been insufficiently critical of the memoirs of Rosa Burley who, in a different way, ground her axe as sharp as Mrs Powell's. De-la-Noy has been unable to resist concentrating on the "love interest" - or the lack of it - in Elgar's life. His view is that it was Mrs Powell, "Dorabella" of the *Enigma Variations*, who was the main inspiration of Elgar's music, not, as the conventional and was indeed Elgar's view, his wife Alice.

De-la-Noy backs up his claim with a range of well known incidents - taken mainly from Mrs Powell's own book, *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation* - which he reassembles to show a *ménage à trois* in which the young girl was allowed to engage in "platonic frolics" with the "moody genius of forty-three", while his wife was grateful to be relieved of "any necessity to play a romantic role" and was thus able to get on with running her



Elgar by William Strang.

a mature musician and still a desperately immature man" is scarcely helpful. There were indeed strong elements of snobishness and selfishness in Elgar, as anyone who has glanced at his letters will know, but in concentrating on these aspects of Elgar's life De-la-Noy has produced a distorted picture. Elgar was a much larger man than we see here, full of enormous energies and enthusiasms - with a matching sense of fun and of the ridiculous. He could also be a very serious man: his general reading was wide and deep as his letters to *The Times Literary Supplement* in its early days show. Both these sides of his character are insufficiently explored here, as are Elgar's deep depressions and dark moods.

De-la-Noy is no friend of the composer. He deprecates Elgar's other-hunting; he passes over the "patriotic" works of the First World War in order to admire the later chamber works (a very foolish view this, and though the latter were once unjustly ignored it is equally blinkered to make the same error with the

Heroes in performance

Stephen Pickles

HARVEY SACHS

Virtuoso: The Life and Art of Niccolò Paganini, Franz Liszt, Anton Rubinstein, Ignace Jan Paderewski, Fritz Kreisler, Pablo Casals, Wanda Landowska, Vladimir Horowitz, Glenn Gould.

Thames and Hudson. £8.95.
0 500 01286 5

Harvey Sachs's *Virtuoso* is not worthy of his subject. It is written in chummy journalese elevated to interest only by frequent quotation. He is ultimately not very informative about his subject. Ideas are thrown up and poorly developed; obvious connections are missed or ignored.

Writing on Horowitz, Sachs quotes Ivan Davis, a pupil of the pianist, in an anecdote on octaves: "Want me to show you how I play my octaves? And I thought, 'Here it is, the secret that all the world's been waiting for.' Horowitz said, 'I practice slow, high from the wrist and in different rhythms.' Of course, everybody practices that way. I didn't learn one thing!"

Sachs refers to Horowitz's performance of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto under Toscanini in 1943, but in doing so as an example of the pianist keeping his "perverse streak" intact. Now in the last movement

of that performance there is a phenomenal series of solo octaves before the final tutti, in which Horowitz welds perverse exhibitionism and musical sense into a virtuoso display. Far from being "in check" this Dionysian thundering would have been a touchstone for anyone hankering after the secret of Horowitz's octaves. It is ignored.

Elsewhere Sachs discusses in detail Horowitz's recorded performance of Schumann's *Fantasy*: "His staccato playing... is desiccated"; "his *ritardando* begin too soon and are exaggerated"; "nothing could be less spontaneous, less exciting, more unmusical than his handling of the coda itself". Certainly the performance is not very Schumannesque - that is, according to certain lights - but how useful is this analysis? A performance can be perverse and yet utterly persuasive if given by a virtuoso. Even if books on musicians contained types of musical illustrations, only a series of comparisons could support opinions on performance qualities. Sachs often refers to the score with some point, but much of the book tries to simplify things for the layman (who will be confused) and this may disappoint the specialist. Rachmaninov and Heifetz, for instance, are not discussed.

The book does have chapters on musicians of whose performances we have no audible record: Paganini, Liszt and Anton Rubinstein. Sachs examines pieces which they composed for themselves alone to play, as well as

moving settings of Laurence Binyon's "For the Fallen"; he calls the Elgars "parvenus" and blames the composer for worrying about money - which was a subject necessarily close to many composers' hearts in the days before adequate royalties were paid. The author's weak sense of the history of Elgar's times is also made into a weapon with which to beat his subject. One example will suffice: he disapproves of Elgar for being one of the signatories to the 1914 letter to *The Times* on Irish Home Rule and says "but more than one million people signed the declaration, civil war broke out, Ireland was partitioned and the bloodshed has never ceased".

People who buy biographies of composers do not, generally speaking, wish to be weighed down with musical examples and comparisons, but they do need to feel confident that the author has understood the music and can draw on it to illustrate the composer as a man. It is here that the root of De-la-Noy's failure lies. It is inconceivable, for example, for anyone who knows *The Dream of Gerontius* well to write, as De-la-Noy does of Elgar, that "he was never a particularly religious person". Elgar was, however, a very private person and De-la-Noy's method of trying to expose that privacy - as with the BBC's continued attempts, which he supports, to "perform" parts of Elgar's sketches for his Third Symphony in absolute disregard of the composer's wishes - help us not at all to understand man or music any better.

An *Elgar Companion*, edited by Christopher Redwood, is a book that those seriously interested in Elgar will want to acquire. It contains many of the most interesting articles written about the composer over the years, which normally can only be found in specialist journals or out-of-print books. Here are the relatively well known assessments by George Bernard Shaw and Ralph Vaughan Williams as well as the less well known but equally interesting accounts of, among others, Neville Cardus, Compton Mackenzie, C. W. Orr and Donald Mitchell. There is a particularly valuable section on "Elgar and other composers" but the article on the "Enigma" of the eponymous variations and the "Gerontius Debacle" (taking between them over sixty pages) have long lost their interest for most people, and could well have been omitted from such a collection. There is little here that has been especially written for the book and it is a pity that the opportunity to include a proper introduction was not taken.

The background to the opera is further explored in an interview between Donald Mitchell and Gold, widow of the opera's librettist Montagu Slater, a remote figure to us, although a prolific writer in numerous genres. Mitchell, who in his recent book, *Britten and Auden in the Thirties*, managed to refrain from mentioning sexual matters altogether, is now gratifyingly straightforward in his questions. Mrs Slater comes across as a delightful, warm, intelligent person, describing the creative bustle of the 1930s with charm and vividness, refraining from bitterness either in the matter of the general neglect of the opera (she attributes it largely to the rampant Communist belief) or in admitting the disappointment she and Montagu felt when Britten went elsewhere for his next libretto. (He went to Ronald Duncan, who would in turn be disappointed and, indeed, bitter.)

Two chapters by Philip Brett complete the historical section of the book. "Pervy visions" (and revisions) is a superb extended analysis of the surviving documents (they are ample) of the composition of the score and endless re-fashioning of the text; it shows that "despite the comments, helpful or otherwise, of his team of supporters" - Peter Pears, Eric Crozier, Duncan and perhaps others - and all the discussions, fruitful or unfruitful, it was Britten himself who made all the decisions, whether at his composing desk or later between rehearsals. It also interestingly traces how homoerotic and other psychological shadings of the Grimes character were gradually expunged, although they are explicitly stated in an early draft-outline of the opera by a Peter Pears, where the Act II, scene 3, monologue to the boy is found to contain an outright demand for love, and to reveal an obsession with the father-figure. The other chapter is an excellent unravelling of the stage history and critical reception of the opera: at home and abroad which not only provides information but asks the important question of why so few music-critics, particularly in Britain,

Victim of the Borough

Paul Driver

PHILIP BRETT (Editor)

Benjamin Britten: 'Peter Grimes'
217pp. Cambridge University Press.
£17.50 (paperback, £5.95).
0 521 22916 2

The latest in the series of Cambridge Opera Handbooks is also the best, the most purposefully compiled and most pleasurable to read. Philip Brett's *Peter Grimes* frankly and sympathetically faces Britten's homosexuality and discovers it to be the crucial interpretative issue. Brett's article, "Britten and Grimes", first published in the *Musical Times* in 1977, and reprinted here along with a postscript had already made the essential declaration; its single insight immediately resolves the general critical perplexity engendered by *Peter Grimes*. The arrangement of material in this "casebook" is as satisfying as its selection is discriminating.

Brett's written contributions to his compilation are considerable: four substantial chapters, three of them specially devised for this book. He also prefaces the first chapter, which comprises reprints of two pieces about Crabbe by E. M. Forster, the first in its original, unrevised form as a *Listener* article, the second a lecture delivered at the first Aldeburgh Festival in 1948 in the wake of the opera's initial success. It was the *Listener* piece, in particular that inspired Britten, who came across it in Los Angeles, to turn to *The Borough* for a possible libretto; and reading it for oneself one can easily see why. Its nostalgic impact could only have been overpowering - a profound and gentle English voice dovetailing, in the Californian West, Britten's most intimate concerns. The lecture, amplifying the critical points of the article, offers an excellent assessment of Crabbe ("Nothing is more remarkable in the best work of Crabbe than the absence of elevation"), quotes copiously from him, and flavours the rest of the book with topographical evocations.

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were able to look beneath the surface of the work, with its manifest moral ambivalence, at the symbolic and allegorical meaning that lies there. Brett wonders if the music-critics were afraid of what they would find and observes that, significantly, it was left to a literary critic, Edmund Wilson, writing in his *Europe Without Baedeker*, to supply a comprehensive and allegorical account of the opera on its first performance.

His fine essay is reprinted here, and makes a startlingly authentic testimony to the greatness of Grimes. Wilson, an initially unwilling spectator, dragged to Sadler's Wells by a girl, found himself compelled to describe the occasion in spite of having little technical knowledge of music. He writes: "There have been relatively few composers of the first rank who had a natural gift for the theatre: Mozart, Mussorgsky, Verdi, Wagner, the Bizet of *Carmen*. To be confronted, with an unimpaired preparation, with an unimpaired talent of this kind is an astonishing, even an electrifying, experience." His explanation of the work as an allegory of the dark forces of war and of day-to-day wartime reality is not, however, entirely convincing.

There is a section of the handbook devoted to synopsis and analysis which precedes the critical debate of which Wilson's contribution is a feature. It is fitting and not at all ironic that the task of synopsis, traditionally a purely mechanical one, should be taken by one of the most brilliant of all commentators on Britten, Hans Keller. "Peter Grimes: the story, the music not excluded" from a survey he edited with Donald Mitchell in 1982, is typically astute. "Grimes" cannot show, let alone prove his tenderness as easily as his wrath - except through the music which, alas, the people on stage don't hear". David Matthews's analysis of the music of Act II, scene 1, is very detailed, very carefully considered and very revealing. It forms an estimable complement to Peter Evans's discussion in Chapter 5 of *The Music of Benjamin Britten*.

Brett's sifting of the contemporary journalistic criticism of *Peter Grimes* yielded only one instance which he considers to have more than ephemeral, merely publicizing value, and that is Desmond Shawe-Taylor's mellifluous, two-part report in the *New Statesman*. Alongside a *Radio Times* article by Peter Pears and a *Music and Letters* essay by J. W. Garbutt, it enunciates a set of problems concerning the nature and extent of our sympathy with Grimes. Shawe-Taylor and Garbutt find the transition from Crabbe's roughneck into Britten's visionary not quite acceptable morally and inconsistent dramatically. If Grimes is not really a murderer, why is he tortured by remorse? If he really has a vision and a dream ("Now the Great Bear and Pleiades"), why should he try obsessively to accommodate himself to the worldly terms of the Borough and its gossip? These and sundry other apparent ambiguities, and the difficulty of precisely understanding Grimes's relationship with Ellen have occasioned much critical worry, although no one has ever doubted that the music bridges all intellectual gaps. Philip Brett cleverly and feelingly points us in his two final chapters to the reconciliation of the contradictions.

Helena Matheopoulos's *Maestro: Encounters with Conductors of Today* (Scribner, Hachette, £12.95, £8.95pb) presents the fruits of conversations between the author and a wide range of living (or recently deceased) conductors. "Conductor-Conductors": Bernstein, Boulez, Previn; "Orchestra-Builders": Abbado, Böhm, Boult, Colin Davis, Giulini, Hindink, Karajan, Levine, Masek, Mackerras, Mehta, Muti, Ozawa, Solti, Tennstedt; "Independent Spirit": Carlos Kleiber; "Soloist-Conductors": Ashkenazy, Rostropovich; and "The Younger Generation": Chailly and Rattle. All discuss their lives and their experience of and attitudes towards music and conducting. Henry Pleasants's *The Great Singers, From the Dawn of Opera to Our Own Time* (Scribner, Macmillan, £5.95, 0 33 34854 0), has been re-issued in an updated edition.

The passing of the plantocracy

James Walvin

MARY TURNER

Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834

223pp. University of Illinois Press. £16.50. 0 252 00961 4

In 1783 Jamaica was the brightest jewel in the British slave empire. The largest British Caribbean island, its tropical produce, especially sugar, was a source of international envy and of apparently inexhaustible wealth for the planters, traders and British interests. But it was made possible by those legions of black slaves, African and Creole, who were shackled to an endless routine of arduous work. Regular infusions of new African arrivals topped up a slave population which was never able to maintain its own numbers, a result primarily of age-structure and sexual imbalance. From the fruits of black labour, the white masters were able, in time, to return "home" to Britain, cutting a dash in London or the spas among their fashionable and propertied friends. The planters' world was at its apogee; moreover it was a world which was largely unchallenged on moral or economic grounds in colony or metropolis. Yet, within fifty years, it had come to an end, unmoored by all but its closest friends. The first blow was struck by the ending of the slave trade in 1807; then the slaves were freed, partially in 1834 and completely in 1838.

No one in 1783 could have envisaged this rapid transformation, as Britain (itself undergoing seismic social and economic change) turned its back on the slaving system it had so lovingly created over the period of a century and more, granting to its black victims the benefits of freedom. In many respects it was to prove a sour freedom, characterized by inescapable rural unemployment and the loss of the security of the plantation. Arguments over the freeing of Britain's black slaves have pre-occupied a growing number of modern historians, especially since the publication of Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* in 1944 and the consequent re-directing of scholarly attention towards the economic aspects of the question. In recent years it has become a common assumption among historians – and even among a wider, informed public – that economic self-interest was the prime motive for abolition and emancipation, just as it had been for the genesis and development of the slave trade and of slavery. This is an argument which fits neatly into a number of widely held present-day attitudes; a greater willingness to accept the primacy of economic forces and a general cynicism

about the role and importance of altruism.

In relation to slavery, there has been a striking tendency to relegate the work of the evangelists and the persuasiveness of religious arguments in helping to undermine black slavery. We need not, however, revert to those pre-Williams arguments which tended to explain the ending of black slavery overwhelmingly and even uniquely as the work of outraged Christian sensibility) to feel that organized religion was indeed important in producing this complex social change. Mary Turner's valuable and important book, *Slaves and Missionaries*, will, among other things, force historians once more to reconsider its impact on the ending of black slavery in the West Indies.

This book, written in a crisp and economical style, and with its wider arguments and particular details rooted in a wealth of research, will compel others to consider two main issues above others. First – and obviously – what were the socially and politically disruptive results of the missionary work undertaken primarily by Baptists and Methodists in Jamaica? Secondly – and in many respects this is an even more tantalizingly difficult question – what role did the slaves themselves play in securing their own freedom? For too long historians (especially in Britain and North America) have tended to view the slaves as, first, the victims and then the beneficiaries of Britain's changing policies. Rarely have they considered the degree to which slaves may have been instrumental in securing their own freedom. Mary Turner makes perfectly clear that the transformation of slave society in Jamaica – through the proliferation of chapels and black Christian congregations between 1787 and 1831 – created a volatile social mix which proved corrosive of slavery itself.

Apologists for the slave system had long pointed to African "heathenism" as justification for enslavement; they none the less fiercely resisted the Christianization of their slaves, and their task was made easier by a supine and conniving Church of England. Not until the flowering of the Baptist and Methodist churches, with their missionary instincts (in Britain no less than in the slave colonies) were slaves substantially exposed to Christianity. But thereafter the results were rapid and dramatic. Pioneering missionaries inevitably had to work with the tolerance – if not the approval – of the plantocracy, but although they specifically eschewed talk of freedom and sought not to undermine slavery, their work proved a destabilizing force. Their chapels, their preaching, the biblical imagery, their educational impact and the encouragement they gave to black preachers, all cumulatively created social and political

tensions which threatened slavery itself.

There is little doubt that Methodists and Baptists had a radicalizing impact in Jamaica, especially after the ending of the slave trade in 1807, when planters, forced to re-organize their labour system, both worked some slaves harder and stripped others of high-status posts. The parallels with the impact of dissent among increasingly distressed outworkers and artisans in Britain are very striking. Moreover the rapid growth of dissent in Britain in the early nineteenth century also proved important in Jamaica. Letters, publications and, later, periodicals brought to British chapels news of their black co-religionists. Returning missionaries travelled the chapel networks giving graphic details of the sufferings of slaves. Thus the expanding movement of British – largely plebeian – dissent was effectively recruited to the slaves' side. This was especially important following slave disturbances, themselves influenced unconsciously by the missionaries and more consciously by their black disciples.

By the late 1820s, with the Colonial Office firmly under Evangelical control and British anti-slavery moving

into a more assertive phase, it became apparent that the missionary struggle to remain impartial in Jamaica was impossible. In December 1831 the Jamaican slave revolt, known as "the Baptist War", erupted. From its savagery, and the ensuing illegal and arbitrary repression (312 slaves were publicly executed in scenes more familiar to the seventeenth century), missionaries and their British backers concluded that reform of slavery was impossible. Only black freedom could cure a plantocratic system of its endemic brutalities and grant the slaves their natural and social rights. In many respects Jamaican whites brought about their own downfall: their hostility to the missionaries, their unchanging violence towards the slaves, their brutality after the revolt and their mob attacks on chapels, all served to convince British opinion that the real savagery of West Indian slavery was to be found in the Great House and not in the slave quarters.

What finally sealed slavery's fate was the reform of Parliament in 1832, which undermined the West Indian parliamentary power-base while strengthening and emboldening anti-slavery's parliamentary ranks. Black freedom, however, still had to be

fought for and was, in the end, only secured by paying massive compensation to the dispossessed planters. Why not, asked many, to the slaves also? None the less when, on August 1834, partial freedom was granted to the slaves, it is significant that they celebrated by flocking to their nearest chapel. In a moving, peaceful and dignified display, thousands of Jamaican blacks packed into the chapels to give thanks for their freedom to a Christian God denied to their slave forebears.

Many recent historians have had serious doubts about the role and importance of organized religion in freeing the slaves. This is odd, because neither slaves nor planters ever had such doubts themselves, the one group praising, the other cursing, the missionaries and their churches for helping to bring down slavery. The importance of Mary Turner's book is thus twofold. Not only does it provide a most persuasive and able argued case, but she also raises further crucial questions to which historians of slavery and abolition must now return. The irony of black freedom remains. An institution which had been born of, and characterized by, persistent violence, ended in peaceful rejoicing.

On the estate

Peter Willmott

TONY PARKER

The People of Providence: A housing estate and some of its inhabitants 374pp. Hutchinson. £12.95 (paperback, £7.95).

Tony Parker has developed a distinctive style of authorship: he encourages people to talk into a tape-recorder and edits what comes out. He usually adds little direct comment – in this book brief descriptions of the people and some of the places, and a two-page appendix on method, coyly labelled "Acknowledgements". This technique sounds easy but it isn't. It depends upon sensitivity and skill in getting people to talk freely about themselves, and in cutting and organizing the resulting material without sacrificing its force or its authenticity.

Mr Parker has done this with marked success: his earlier books – for example on prisoners, unmarried mothers and house-keepers – have won a deserved reputation. The latest, based on five years' work, is more ambitious. It sets out to present a picture not just of a small homogeneous group but of a large housing estate. Two hundred people were recorded for a total of 340 hours. Most of this material was discarded. The book is made up of a series of interviews with one person, sometimes with a couple and in one case with a group of twelve-year-olds.

"Providence" – the name is fictitious – is in South London, a mixture of tower blocks, long six-storey slabs, lower flats and older houses, some owned privately, others by the council, and some converted, others still awaiting modernization. Planned by the Greater London Council, the estate has been transferred to the local borough authority since the book's completion. Once something of a showpiece, it has proved to be less than a complete success, if one judges from some of Parker's respondents (though others are warmly complimentary) and from what he observed in one of the slabs: "The lifts didn't work; they stood with their doors broken open, inoperative on the ground floors. A handwritten notice on a page torn out of an exercise book had been attached to one of them: 'To Whom It May Concern: Will You Please Stop

Using This Lift As A Toilet. Thank You!' Providence seems, alas, reasonably characteristic of an inner area whose redevelopment was planned after 1945.

People did not merely describe their present lives on the estate and express their opinions of the place. They were clearly asked to begin by saying something about themselves and their backgrounds. This gives a richness and depth to the chapters, making more sense of accounts of people's recent experience and their judgments about the estate, the block, the flat or the neighbours. A person's response to life at Providence is at least partly conditioned by what has happened earlier, even if the estate itself may exert a powerful influence, and in illustrating this Parker gives a more rounded picture than do most other investigators.

The diversity of people's lives is striking. The first chapter presents a young couple full of joy at being rehoused out of two rooms to a fourteenth-floor flat; the wife says "Being up here is I'm sure the nearest to heaven I'll ever get." The other people include a depressed woman in a tower block, who complains "It's not like a street with other people" and adds "If I decide to finish, all I need to do is go out on the balcony and it's there, an end sixteen floor below"; a woman who admires the Queen, saying she was "sure that in elections and things she votes Labour just like the rest of us ordinary people do"; a 75-year-old widower who has "an hour or two in bed" each week with one of twelve similarly-aged widows or single women met through the church ("a very good meeting place"); a cheerful West Indian who thinks the way to live is "relax relax"; a homosexual who is grateful to a GLC that was willing to rent a flat to two men, and appreciative of the neighbours' tolerance.

Parker interviewed, as well as residents, a number of professional and service workers, including the local GP, the vicar, a headteacher, a social worker, two GLC officials and the two "beat" constables. They are grouped into sections of the book under the heading "outsiders", and most did live out in the suburbs. Virtually all of them show up well, conscientious and concerned, aware of the estate's problems and their complexity.

Some of the interviews link up with each other. Several housewives, for instance, refer to "Dr Gray", the GP, mentioning his reluctance to prescribe tranquillisers, though he himself reports that about half his patients had been or were currently taking them. The health visitor also talks about Dr Gray's role and, in her turn, is mentioned by the spokesman for a commune of squatters, who explains that by a majority vote they had decided to allow health visitors in: "Just because they're part of the State apparatus doesn't mean we should spit in their eye." The two policemen both talk, sensibly and understandingly about the somewhat different approach of the other. One lone mother discusses a helpful neighbour, who turns up in a later chapter with a new perspective on both of them. This cross-referencing helps to give a sense of Providence as a real place, with its local institutions, social relationships and inter-dependencies. The book thus avoids giving the impression that the subjects of the separate chapters are atoms leading wholly independent lives.

Nevertheless, Parker does not attempt any conclusions, make any assessment, draw up a balance sheet. The book's subtitle, quite properly, refers only to "some" of Providence's inhabitants. At the same time the reader is bound to come away with generalized impressions: perhaps that, though there is some black/white conflict, most blacks feel at home on the estate; that its residents are mainly tolerant; that, though some in tower blocks are unhappy, they are all right for most.

But this book cannot be used like that. As I have said earlier, Parker does not describe his methods at any length. It is, however, clear that he recruited his informants in a variety of ways: he wrote to some, others responded to an invitation in the window of a local newsagent's, others were referred by friends or neighbours, others again were approached in the street. Of these he interviewed, only a quarter are included in the book. It is obvious that these people may well not "represent" the population of Providence in the sense of properly reflecting their characteristics, their experience or their views. It is worth asking, for example, whether the serenity expressed by blacks might have resulted from a likelihood that discontented blacks would have been less willing to be interviewed by a white man.

So the book is not, as its blurb might suggest, a substitute for "official reports or sociological surveys". It is true; however, that it has qualities absent from almost all such reports and surveys; more conventional researchers could usefully learn from Parker. As a set of vignettes it is a triumph, capturing vividly and movingly what contemporary urban life is like – for at least some of the people of Providence.

instance, refer to "Dr Gray", the GP, mentioning his reluctance to prescribe tranquillisers, though he himself reports that about half his patients had been or were currently taking them. The health visitor also talks about Dr Gray's role and, in her turn, is mentioned by the spokesman for a commune of squatters, who explains that by a majority vote they had decided to allow health visitors in: "Just because they're part of the State apparatus doesn't mean we should spit in their eye." The two policemen both talk, sensibly and understandingly about the somewhat different approach of the other. One lone mother discusses a helpful neighbour, who turns up in a later chapter with a new perspective on both of them. This cross-referencing helps to give a sense of Providence as a real place, with its local institutions, social relationships and inter-dependencies. The book thus avoids giving the impression that the subjects of the separate chapters are atoms leading wholly independent lives.

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Not by projects alone

Charles Madge

JOAN HIGGINS, NICHOLAS DEAKIN, JOHN EDWARDS and MALCOLM WICKS

Government and Urban Poverty: Inside the policy-making process 215pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15 (paperback, £5.95). 0 631 12937 5

Over the past fifteen years, a series of government programmes has sought to aid the disadvantaged citizen. This commendably short, well-constructed, carefully written book sets out to tell their story from the inside, so far as the processes of government are concerned, two of the four authors having been involved in them at the Home Office, while another was head of the GLC Central Policy Unit, and the fourth, Joan Higgins, has made a study of the American urban programmes which prompted ours.

The conclusions they draw are, in their own words, "generally pessimistic". This is the world of *Yes, Minister*, in which it doesn't much matter what government is in power, and in which civil servants hatch schemes which they subsequently dismantle as they begin to go wrong. The Community Development Project, for instance, was conceived in 1968 by Derek Morrell of the Home Office, an unusually energetic civil servant and a committed Catholic. His premature death in 1969 allowed the Project to be taken over for purposes quite different from those he had envisaged, which were of a spiritual and moral order.

Impatient with Home Office inertia, the twelve Project Directors set up their own Consultative Council, and Information and Intelligence Unit. The staff they recruited tended to be disaffected social workers – some had been involved in student politics, others in CND and the peace movement. The Intelligence Unit, before it was finally closed down in 1976, produced and sold a series of reports attacking the Labour Government from a radical standpoint. These included *Gilding the Ghetto*, an exposure of the Urban Programme as an ineffective cosmetic exercise, an attempt by the government to manage the poor rather than to eradicate deprivation. This was more than the Home Office could take.

To quote Ms Higgins, in 1968 the problem they faced was crime, urban decay and immigration; in 1974 it was also CDP. When the Project was finally closed down in 1978, Brynmor John, announcing its termination in the House of Commons, claimed that it had principally taught the government "what not to do". The Urban Programme was announced by Harold Wilson in May 1968, a fortnight after Enoch Powell's

"rivers of blood" speech. Since then it has been expanded and contracted in various ways, but at the time this book was written it consisted of 4,910 "projects", in the form of quite small grants to local authorities – examples given include "Provision of Vaseotomy Facilities" (Bristol, £2,000), "Nursery Unit at Balford Army Camp (Wiltshire, £10,271), "Contact Tracer for VD" (Warley, £900). The authors, one of whom carried out a detailed evaluation of the programme at the Home Office, conclude that "it is not, in a strict and useful sense, evaluable", and look on both the programme and the review as "part of the web of symbolic politics".

In the latter period of the Heath Administration, the Home Secretary, Robert Carr, was made responsible for coordinating government policy on urban deprivation. He set up an Urban Deprivation Unit and also an interdepartmental review of policy, or PAR (Policy Analysis and Review) – a Whitehall innovation, subsequently abandoned. A report from this body received support from a Cabinet committee of the (by then) Labour Government, and the Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, announced a Comprehensive Community Programme. This was better thought out than the previous programmes, but its proponents, including Mr Jenkins, rapidly lost interest, and by 1977 it had been wound up without anything to show.

In the same year the three Inner Area Studies (of areas in Lambeth, Liverpool and Birmingham) were published. Commissioned by a Conservative minister, Peter Walker, they were made the basis for a new policy by Peter Shore, Labour Secretary of State for the Environment. His Mammoth Department now took over from the Home Office the primary responsibility for urban problems. He also shifted the emphasis of urban policy towards restoring the economic viability of the inner cities. Seven Partnerships were set up in inner city areas, including those which had been studied; in these central and local government were to work together. When, under Mrs Thatcher, Michael Heseltine took over the Department of the Environment, his statement of objectives for the Partnerships differed hardly at all from Mr Shore's, but he also set up Urban Development Corporations for the Liverpool and London docklands, and a limited number of small Enterprise Zones, in which planning restrictions were to be lifted, and entrepreneurial enterprise subsidized. Nicholas Deakin, who writes the chapter on these developments, is not optimistic about their future. "Alas", he concludes, "all experience so far suggests... that the inner-city policy will eventually join the CDP and CCP and the whole alphabet soup of past initiatives in the scrapyard of redundant experiments."

Downward path

Norman Stone

ROBERT M. ADAMS

Downward Path: A History of the German Revolution, 1918-1933 240pp. Corgi. £10.95 (paperback, £4.95).

Robert M. Adams has written on a variety of subjects, including Milton, Joyce, the problems of translation, and the concept of textual openness. He has translated works by Machiavelli, More, Voltaire and many others. His latest publishers' blurb on this new book, which is a little essay on decadence, Adams talks about four cases – Rome (East and West), France before 1789, Russia before 1917, and the British Empire – before discussing modern America in the light of what he has said about the rest.

The book is short, and its sentences are not too long, but even so its purpose is far from clear. Its early on "taxes" appears to be its main message. There is next to no indication of the author's sources, and there are a number of inaccuracies. The *Table of*

Two Cities view of the French Revolution crops up, in defiance of modern scholarship on the French nobility. The Kaiser had no trouble in getting for 'mein Tiertz' just about everything he wanted" (ie, for the German revolutionaries to take over the Kaiser's army, which was a German 'militar' Mark levied 'actually a thousand million' to 'pay' for armaments; it is said to have been 'overwhelming' the German 'rich' tax). But it is in fact a small ventriloquist. On 1918 Elser's 'stab-in-the-back' legend on armaments by a figure of eight to one" and "Oxford Group" are telling young Englishmen not to fight for King and Country. Sector I of the economy is asserted to be 'retail and service industries' on p137. No doubt this list could be extended.

In any case, the enterprise is fundamentally wrong: how can you compare the end of two systems of government with that of two world empires? A pulchritude of lawyers in America, these men (taxes), a breakdown in law and order, too many 'idle members of the nobility' and, in England, grubbier streets and killer newspapers than in the past. It all might be the start of an interesting study.

The "social context" is that of Paris at the end of the eighteenth century – that rascally, sprawling, stinking city, so evocatively described by Louis Sébastien Mercier, its commerce and trade dominated by the independent shopkeeper and skilled artisan. In the 1790s, Paris boasted just one employer for every three salaried workers, and it was to be from the ranks of these shopkeepers and craftsmen – tailors, cobblers, furniture-makers, small building contractors – that the "sans-culottes" of the Revolution were to emerge, skilled above all by 1793 in the craft of insurrection. Like their mature counterparts of the Year II, the sans-culottes of the early years of the Revolution did not form a coherent, social class: some of their members were relatively well-to-do; most were anxious to protect their skills and whatever property they possessed. The 'labouring poor' who played a role in the Popular Movement generally found their ideas and motivation in the book-bags of the master-artisans they served and lived with. Professor Rose deals a body-blow to the Cobbinate tendency, whose followers cling to the concept of a 'declining class of office-holders' precipitating the revolutionary crisis. This nonsense is dismissed in summary fashion: "A deeper investigation of the social composition of the base of the Parisian Revolution in 1789, the Parisian electorate, provides additional reinforcement to a traditional vision of the Revolution as the work jointly of a commercial,

industrial and professional middle class."

The political ideas of the future sans-culottes were to be acquired, in the first place, through their attendance at the meetings of the sixty districts created, for electoral reasons, in April 1789, and, later on, through the popular societies. It was in these "workshops of democracy", as Rose describes them, that the Momoros and the Desmoulins were to articulate, in appropriately Rousseauesque prose, the politics of the *quartier*: the "autonomy" of the district or, subsequently, the *section*; the right to meet in permanence; the insistence on "direct" as opposed to "representative" democracy; the importance of "extra-parliamentary" activity. How modern it all sounds and how modern it is! The Parisian districts even created *commissaires* as early as 1789 to supervise "the cleaning, the lighting of the streets, closing times shops and city gates, cafes, lodging houses, inns, gaming-houses." Not the least significant aspect of "1789" was to be the revolution in local government, the municipal revolution. Tension between those who favoured a decentralized and local vision of revolution as opposed to those responsible for running a centralized war dictatorship was to be at the heart of the conflict between Jacobins and sans-culottes during the Year II. Simplistic "class" analyses can only obscure one important element of the struggle: that between the politics of the *quartier* and the exigencies of State power.

Alarmed by the degree of independence manifested by the districts, the government replaced them in the summer of 1790 by forty-eight *sections*, again intended primarily for electoral purposes. Membership was to be restricted to adult males who paid the equivalent of three days' wages in direct taxation, the so-called "active citizens". As called because, as Cobb had suggested, no more than 3,000-4,000 "activists" ever attended meetings. Rose's chapter on the *sections* between 1790 and 1792 is the least satisfactory in the book, its stunning brevity – just seven pages – reflecting as much the lack of documentation relating to these institutions as their lack of dynamism. "The evolution of democratic ideas" which began to proliferate in Paris from the beginning of 1791, the stalwarts of the Cordeliers Club, flanked by the newer radical societies, which helped to organize the Champ d' Mars demonstration on July 17, 1791, an event, as Rose points out, which represented far more than a knee-jerk reaction to the King's flight from Paris a few weeks earlier. In some ways, it was the culmination of a prolonged campaign against the more conservative aspects of the constitution of 1791. Although the "messengers of the

separable women's history", he was too much a product of the old grand *école* for that. He would, however, have thoroughly approved, doubtless with that old warmth and passion which was his distinctive hallmark, of the conclusion drawn by Rose that, despite the failure of the sans-culottes movement, "it is impossible that the memory of the experience of the 1790s was ever completely expunged." For Soboul never allowed a false "objectivity" to interfere with his history. He was a committed, schematic historian, but one who believed profoundly in the possibility of men making their own history. It has occasionally been alleged that, particularly when compared with the historians of the described by the *his sans-culottes* school, he operated in too narrow a time-space. The importance of the contribution made by Professor Rose's work is to enlarge time if not in space, the action of the sans-culottes.

The Longman handbook of modern British history 1714-1980 by John Cook and John Stevenson 300pp. Longman. £12.95 (paperback, £5.95). 0 582 48381 9. This basic facts and figures book of British history since 1714, though the "messengers of the

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industrial and professional middle class."

For puffer buffs

Sherwin Bailey

BRITAIN HOLLINGSWORTH

The Pleasures of Railways: A Journey by Train through the Delectable Country of Enthusiasm 240pp. Allen Lane. £6.95. 0 7139 1512 9

Britain Hollingsworth concerns himself in this book with "pleasures that come by chance from railways built for serious reasons". Wisely, he does not attempt to define the nature of such pleasures, but shows where and how they can be bought and experienced. He does this by taking the reader on an imaginary journey by train through the delectable country of enthusiasm for railways.

Railway journeys begin with a sensation of a timetable, which the author explains the art of compiling timetables: both public and private. He also shows the art of reading the timetable, and all this is done in a pleasant and comparative study of the railway enthusiast, it is unlikely that the uninitiated reader will be converted to enthusiasm himself, particularly if he feels that it necessitates the use of such repugnant neologisms as "ferro-quinology". The neologism enthusiast, however, will find much here to interest and inform him, though he will doubtless close the book with a sense of relief that the author has not gone on to discuss the steam locomotive, the

preservation of which is dealt with in a later chapter. The moment of departure has now arrived, and the driver awaits the "right away" given by a wave of the guard's green flag. This simple signal takes the reader into a description of "the art of signalling, one of the railways", but regrettably there is no mention of the craft of the signaller, nor of the pleasure to be derived from a visit (duly authorized, of course) to a signal-box, to watch the "bobby" ply his responsible craft.

The journey having begun, train timing, train watching, and track are discussed; and since rail travel often involves changing trains at a junction, this affords an opportunity to review junctions, among which the reader is treated to a particularly entertaining, not to say absurd, example from Ireland – Limerick Junction. After this chapter on junctions there follows appropriately one on branch lines and light railways. Dining and sleeping cars are then discussed, and books to take on the journey.

The book is enlivened with examples and anecdotes drawn from all over the world. Beyond learning the art of the thing which interests and excites the railway enthusiast, it is unlikely that the uninitiated reader will be converted to enthusiasm himself, particularly if he feels that it necessitates the use of such repugnant neologisms as "ferro-quinology". The neologism enthusiast, however, will find much here to interest and inform him, though he will doubtless close the book with a sense of relief that the author has not gone on to discuss the steam locomotive, the

Poling stations

Bruce Hepburn

R.T. RIVINGTON

Painting: Its History and Techniques 228pp. R.T. Rivington, 36 Park End Street, Oxford. £10.95. 0 950843 2 5

Here is everything that we've always wanted to know, but have never liked to ask, about the only water sport for grown-ups. Here too is an evocation of the delights of "pricking" (the author is very strict about nomenclature) a well-favoured member of either sex along shallow rivers with gravel beds, although preferably not in much of a hay harvest breeze. Not, at all events, until the stern disciplines of "steering with the stroke" have been mastered. We really cannot be too often reminded that there are no pleasures like slow pleasures; among these, messing about in "flat bottomed craft" without keel, stem or stern post – just how this effect should be achieved – he describes in quoted passages (W. H. Grenfell, father of the egregious Julian

and Billy is well to the fore here) which recall those military manuals that make the simplest instructions sound like blueprints for the creation of matter. "Reach forward to the full extent, apply the weight then take a step back which corresponds to sliding, finish square, and, as it were, slide slowly forward and repeat the dose." Rivington has provided many splendid photographs to accompany all this.

Rivington, too, is game for excursions up tributary streams. He not only provides a first-rate account of the Gordon Relief Expedition (origin of Donalda racing) but suggests that there may well be punting after death. There seems to be good evidence that when Charon ferries us across the Styx to Hades with our fare between our teeth, he propels us with a pole rather than a scull. It is true that he probably stands in the well of a canoe rather than on the "saloon" – should he be a Cambridge man – of a punt, but the great thing about punters is that, being well-balanced adults, they know better than to expect everything in the garden to be as rosy either in this world or the next.

Exploring the boundaries

George Craig

MARGUERITE DURAS

La maladie de la mort

Paris: Minuit.
2 7073 0639 8

If there is a general indulgence for writers who dabble in other arts (as there often is for those who practise one or other of these, try their hand at writing), things can change sharply if the writer shows signs of commitment to another medium yet goes on writing. That is when worries start about whether X is "really" a writer at all. More is at issue than rival matters of classification, and this is immediately apparent if the dividedness is expressed in rival conceptions of word and image: for example, fiction and film. Here uncertainty as to authorial purpose is compounded by anxiety over the relative vitality and durability of the two modes.

In all this the case of Marguerite Duras is central. The surface is clear enough: there is her growing involvement with experimental cinema, there is the marked shift in her writing from sequential-early to elliptical-late. Indeed, with the opening words of *L'homme atlantique* (published early in 1982), it must look as if all is resolved in favour of film: "Vous ne regarderez

pas la caméra. Sauf lorsqu'on l'exigera de vous." Finally, her latest novel provides explicit indications as to how the text might be filmed or staged. But the same commentary makes clear just how misleading the surface signals are: "Je crois toujours que rien ne remplace la lecture d'un texte... rien, aucun jeu".

"Vous devriez ne pas la connaître... Vous pourriez l'avoir payée" — somewhere between the guesswork of a party game, the fortune-teller's fumbly and the hints offered to actors by script-writer or director, the novel and its separate sequences take off. A central voice plays with the possibilities, grows excited as glimpse hardens to vision, invents an increasingly particular fiction. As the conditional tense moves to the present, successive, overlapping approximations shape a sequence of encounters in which the male "vous", having bought the services of an enigmatic and beautiful young woman, learns what it means to have "la maladie de la mort". It means, above all, failure: failure to break out of the narrow repetitiveness of male fantasy, to reach beyond the tangible, compliant body to the autonomous and detached woman, to be aware of any feeling that is not narcissistic. Insistently, the voice details the failure: "Jusqu'à cette nuit là vous n'aviez pas compris comment on pouvait ignorer ce que vient les yeux, ce que touchent les mains."

Against the surges of frustrated effort there is the calm presence of the young woman:

Vous lui demandez si elle est une prostituée. Elle fait signe que non. Vous lui demandez pourquoi elle a accepté le contrat des nuits payées. Elle répond d'une voix encore endormie, presque inaudible: Parce que dès que vous m'avez parlé j'ai vu que vous étiez atteint par la maladie de la mort.

Desperation confronts serenely, while scintillatingly the contrast is between the figure of the man, now approaching, now backing away, and that of the woman, still, framed in the whiteness of the bed-sheets until, the time of nights over, she leaves.

But as the sequence unfolds, the very starkness of this *décalage* and the normative presentation of sexual difference quickly take us beyond the show of anecdotal particularity. If the male seems at first exceptional — an emotionally crippled isolate — the form of his inadequacy is increasingly suggested as normal, for a man. The inability to love, the unappeasable need to know, the regressive longings may be central to the narrative, but they are also the marks of the sex which is always "outside", in spite of the illusory power conferred by money or physical strength. If that is so, "la maladie de la mort" is every man's condition.

Yet that account too is misleading: the starkness is revealing in another way, for the woman in whose presence the failure is acted out is more than simply adequate where the man is not. She is, in her beauty, her serenity, her understanding and her capacity to accept, perfect. The male fantasy of domination is being dismantled from within the male fantasy of the ideal woman.

In a serious woman writer uninterested in polemics such a venture must seem absurdly, perversely risky. It must be said that the risk does not come off, for the close focus picks out too the extent to which the alternative possibilities of aberrant anecdote and representative condition remain unrepresentatively separate. But the element of perversity, by its very obtrusiveness, throws unexpected light on an element that runs right through the work of Mme Duras. It is a commonplace that she is much concerned in her writing with the major oppositions by which we conventionally understand the world: male and female, sleeping and waking, parent and child, inside and outside, past and future. Her gift for imagining an extraordinarily charged here-and-now through which pass the lines of all these, seem, in a relatively early work like, say, *Moderato Cantabile*, justification enough for the emphasis given to the terms of the oppositions. But from *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* onwards, the distinctions explored be-

come those that cannot be charted with such confidence (powerless/powerful, normal/abnormal, hurting/hurt). What matters, it becomes clear, is the existence of boundaries: that is, of more or less settled connotations for what might lie on the one side or the other of a putative line. The latest novel allows an important revision of this by suggesting that Duras is drawn by what lies on the "wrong" side of any boundary. It is as if her imagination were quickened above all by the possibility of judgement as to the impossibility or unacceptability of this or that.

Any such imagination is likely, even when censorious, to linger fascinatedly on the imagined state of disposition. But there is no question of censoriousness in Duras — and no limit to the fascination of the aberrant. The possible sado-masochistic episodes in her work are indeed located round a central notion of violence, but the violence has far less to do with the detail of physical or moral assault than with the excited, almost tremulous conceiving of difference, of unfamiliar excess. What matters, in fact, is the imagining of power: intimated real power against familiar supposed power. And so her exploration is not so much of known boundaries as into where boundaries might lie. Perhaps there is a due to her sense of the relation of fiction to film. Fiction is the known mode — might real power lie in the less known?

LANGUAGE

Diagnosis as disease

Colin Gordon

HUBERT L. DREYFUS and PAUL RABINOW

Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics

231pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95.

0 7108 0450 4

CHARLES C. LEMERT and GARTH GILLAN

Michel Foucault: Social Theory and Transgression

109pp. Columbia University Press.

\$9.50.

0 231 05190 5

Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow

have a tale to tell about Michel Foucault, one with the virtues of simplicity, symmetry, a happy ending and a moral. The human sciences and their philosophies have, the authors think, been prone to two great errors: hermeneutics and structuralism. From 1954 to 1970, Foucault's work is successively vilified by each of these tendencies. *Histoire de la folie* is a "distillation with hermeneutic depth"; *The Birth of the Clinic*, *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* are marked by "an overreaction to hermeneutics" which lurches over into "a sort of structuralism" (even though the authors also manage to concur with Foucault's own opinion that he was never a structuralist). And then, with his article on Nietzsche and *The History of Sexuality 1*, Foucault is seen as breaking through into a new method of "hermeneutic analytics". He discovered that "when viewed from the right distance and with the right vision, there is a profound visibility to

everything". "The world is not a play which simply masks a true reality that exists behind the scenes. It is as it appears. This is the profundity of the genealogist's insight."

The book thus falls into two parts. The first, entitled "The illusion of autonomous discourse", runs briskly through Foucault's early *Wanderjahre*. Most of it is occupied by an approving précis of a chapter in *The Order of Things* about the philosophical traps and pitfalls of the human sciences, which provides the authors with ammunition for a critique of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, designed to show that Foucault's own procedures amount to a sophisticated version of the dead-end he had previously diagnosed in *The Order of Things*. Part Two expounds his later works as a double-barrelled history of the oppressive effects of structuralism ("the objectifying human sciences") and hermeneutics ("the subjectifying human sciences") — a kind of *de facto* refutation of the doctrines of which Foucault himself had formerly (according to the authors) been an exponent.

Perhaps it is just as well that the successive stages of this narrative are not always very smoothly joined together. The authors tell us that their book "was born out of disagreement among friends". In its final form, it reads in places like a slightly scrappy compromise. The second part, although wildly tendentious in places, finds room for some serviceable passages of exposition and paraphrase. The first part accumulates a series of fundamental errors in its coverage of every book it deals with. To write about *Histoire de la folie* as "seeing breaking through into a new method of hermeneutic analytics" is to miss the deepest and most inaccessibly reaches of human experience, or about *The Birth of the Clinic* as based on the assumption "that all practices — institutional, technical

and political, as well as those that were specifically discursive — were, at any given time, all manifestations of the same underlying structure or code?" is so wrong as to make one seriously doubt whether the writer can have read these books at all. Behind these capacious phrases one detects the workings of a cynical stratagem — of using Foucault's own scattered self-critical comments on his earlier works as a pretext for turning these into a kind of exegetical free-fire zone.

Histoire de la folie and *Birth of the Clinic*, which many would count among Foucault's more considerable achievements, are disposed of here in thirteen pages. *The Order of Things* gets twenty-seven; but these skip over virtually all but the first and last chapters. One cannot, accordingly, hope to find much guidance here on the famous problem of the "epistémè", or on Foucault's way of handling questions of conceptual change. There is, however, one extraordinary piece of expository disinformation. "He does not explain... any explanation would only make sense within a specific frame of reference and hence within a specific epistémè. Any explanation put forth to explain the change from one period to another would add nothing to our understanding of the fundamentally abrupt and unexpected nature of these changes." There is not the slightest doubt that Foucault ever contemplated the act of intellectual *hara-kiri* which this gloss generously offers him. In a discussion to which Dreyfus and Rabinow refer elsewhere, Foucault recently said that "to recognise a discontinuity is never anything more than to register a problem that needs to be solved". His preface to the English edition of *The Order of Things* admitted that he had indeed refrained from attempting to solve the problems of discontinuity registered in that book. But the excuse

he gave for this omission was contingent difficulty and complexity, not transcendently grounded non-intelligibility.

The authors' central objection to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is a charge more often heard from Marxist thinkers anxious to convict Foucault of bourgeois deviation: that it treats discourse as an absolutely autonomous, even hegemonic, instance of social reality. Their reading accomplishes here something of a tour de force of detailed misinterpretation. When, for example, Foucault writes that the function a discourse performs within a field of non-discursive practices should be considered as one of the "formative elements" constitutive of that discourse's identity, he is read as saying that "the nondiscursive practices are elements which discursive practices take up and transform" (my italics).

Much of the authors' desire to credit the Foucault of the *Archaeology* with a view of discourse as "self-referring" appears to come from their belief that the very activity of "structuralist" thinking constitutes a moral error. Foucault is blamed for neglecting "the way discursive practices are themselves affected by the social practices in which they and the *investigator* are imbedded" (my italics). The archaeologist's posture of objectivity entraps him in a sterile nihilism. Treatise on "speakers' convictions that they are uttering serious truths about man and society" as illusory, he puts in their place nothing but "a set of meaningless strict rules". But, Dreyfus and Rabinow ask, does this not mean the archaeologist forfeits his own right to serious, meaningful utterances?

Rather surprisingly, it is Nietzsche who inspires Foucault to find his way back to committed seriousness. Once he learns to relinquish "the archaeologist's claim that he is totally detached from the realm of serious discourse", and can see that "the seriousness of... discourses can only be understood as part of a society's ongoing history", Foucault becomes "able to diagnose our problems because he shares them." "The disease he seeks to cure is part of an epidemic which has also affected him." Incarnation, passion, redemption...

It seems out of place to judge this book as a contribution to our understanding of Foucault's ideas. It should be read as a sincere, if at times rancorous witness to the authors' old-fashioned brand of secular sociology. (The "Afterword" contributed by Foucault himself is in fact a quite self-contained, and very useful, pair of essays on "The Subject and Power".)

Charles C. Lemert and Garth Gillan have written a slim book which their blurb modestly calls "the foremost extensive analysis of Foucault available to date in any language — and the best possible introduction to this original mind". They write in a vivacious, impetuous style which seems to be a sort of mimetic rendition of the qualities they discern in Foucault.

He is bald as well as brilliant and, because of this, he is an imposing figure... Cryptic? Confusing? Absurd? Yes, but it is not nonsense. Since Foucault wants to enslave the limits of language, he cannot rely, purely and simply, on ordinary language to express himself... Taboo is society's Critical social theory is not transcendence of the social, but transgression. Truth is in power. Theory is politics... Death is concrete because power is tactical knowledge... Those who, in the name of science, will their truth by controlling the world of fact are in league with those who wilfully control lives by the mystification that life will outrun death. Silence is the basic fact of discourse, including historical and social scientific discourse.

The authors succeed at times in conveying a certain foggy impression of things happening, but the overall effect is something of a nightmare. Seldom do Lemert and Gillan leave a topic less confused than they found it. Readers in need of a Foucault guidebook are much better off with Alan Sheridan's *Michel Foucault: The will to truth*.

It should be noted that the list of Foucault's writings presented by Lemert and Gillan as "comprehensive except for the omission of several relatively minor pieces" in fact excludes over fifty items, including the bulk of Foucault's shorter political writings.

The rhythms of life

Robin Buss

PAUL GADENNE

Siloe

553pp. Paris: Seuil.
2 02 006375 1

Le vent noir

2 02 006358 8

Paul Gadenne died in 1956 at the age of forty-five, a victim of the tuberculosis which he had contracted more than twenty years earlier, shortly after completing the *agrégation* and starting his career as a teacher. His work, from the publication of *Siloe* in 1941, was not entirely ignored during his lifetime and it experienced a small revival in 1973, with the appearance of *Les Hauts-queurs*. Gadenne is a highly individual writer, difficult to fit into any particular school or movement, and the recent reissue of *Siloe* provides the opportunity for a reassessment.

Like most first novels, *Siloe* has a clearly autobiographical element. Its central character, Simon Delambre, seems set for a brilliant academic career when he discovers that he has TB. Following a pattern repeated elsewhere in Gadenne's work, he suffers a total dislocation of outlook with his transfer to a sanatorium, the abandonment of his studies and the imposition of an entirely new rhythm on his life. Gadenne, who must have come to know the medical profession well during his own prolonged battle against ill-health, gives a graphic account of the initiation ceremonies through which Simon has to pass in this institution. The sanatorium is well represented as a place of social well-regulated life, but it is not the only world that Simon discovers. The outside world, in which he has been so long confined, is a place of social well-regulated life, but it is not the only world that Simon discovers. The outside world, in which he has been so long confined, is a place of social well-regulated life, but it is not the only world that Simon discovers.

and of Gadenne's other work: in *Le vent noir* it leads to violence and madness when thwarted. The women in both novels therefore tend to appear as shadowy figures, real only in relation to the central male character's search for wholeness, which they either assist or disappoint. Minnie's hand, for example, "une petite main froide qui glissait dans la vôtre comme un couteau", marks her out as a disjunctive being, while Ariane's oneness with the outside world is marked by the possibility of a reconciliation with it: "A chacune des questions que Simon lui posait, Ariane faisait exactement la réponse que le torrent ou la forêt auraient pu faire". *Siloe* treats the war and all other events external to the consciousness of its central character with an absolute assurance of their unreality, and this feeling of timelessness is as much evident in *Le vent noir*, first published in 1947. Not only was Gadenne resolutely uncommitted at a time when political commitment was loudly proclaimed as the duty of the artist; he pursued his solitary way with a conviction that is itself a form of engagement.

Simon/Gadenne is aware that his experiences in the sanatorium come eventually to complement the upbringing he has acquired through his study of classical literature, but what saves the novel from being merely an academic exercise is the total conviction which he brings to it and his awareness of the symbolic nature of language: words, as Simon tells Ariane, "arrêtent l'imagination au lieu de lui laisser la porte ouverte". The enterprise, in both novels, was to break through this barrier in order to perceive a reality beyond, but one is left with the paradoxical impression that something has been achieved despite the writer's assertion that "des l'instant qu'au lieu de vivre une chose, vous l'exprimez, elle cesse d'appartenir à la réalité".

Eventually, in *Siloe* as in *Le vent noir*, the sought-for union with the woman turns out to have been, after all, part of a process of liberation from her. Ariane is made one with nature, swallowed up in an avalanche, while in *Le vent noir* Luc's passion for Marcelle drives him to murder and kidnapping before he is finally released from her. This second novel is in some ways more

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